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Event Marketing – Increase Your Visibility & Attendance

By Jodi Cross



Event marketing can spark a glamorous connotation. We envision red carpets, celebrity sightings, decadent food and elegant decorations. For anyone in the event marketing business, we know that the glamorous façade is a sham. Successful events take careful planning and management to fill a room. What do you do if you don't have a big budget or a celebrity speaker or endorsement as a hook? Simply put, creativity and marketing can create the buzz you need to engage the right crowd. Here are some best practices for creating visibility and growing your attendance.

PLANNING

Every meeting or event starts with a plan. Outline your goals; consult with your team or clients to determine what measurements and metrics for success can be put into place. Layout the goals on a timetable and tie every step of the event planning into the timeline agreed upon. Goals can range from; a product launch to fundraising to innovations or information assimilation.

The challenge today is to create buzz in a cluttered market place where consumers have “seen it all”. Consider tying your event in with a current news trend, hot celebrity or high-visibility keynote speaker. The selection of a keynote speaker can often be a miss-step. Companies look at the price tag instead of the appeal to their target audience.

Speakers don't have to cost a lot of money. We hired a speaker who was not a well-known name but her products were. We framed the whole conversation around *The Making of Gilt Group* the on-line buying portal, and how she built an empire.

Try infusing humor, food samplings, social media, product demonstrations and contests to keep the momentum and buzz going. Your plan is in place, the dates and location has been determined. Now is the time to start to build interest and awareness.

EVENT DETAILS

The cornerstone of all the promotion efforts is the event page or website. This is a page or website specific to the event details. Make it compelling by including ALL of these elements:

- Description of event using key words so search engines can find you
- Speakers and flow of events, the event page should show their faces and list their credentials
- Image and logo of the event plus any past pictures of people having an engaging experience, be sure to use title tags and headers for enhanced search ability
- Snippets of Video or interviews with speakers that could appear on social media
- Register now button should be visible as a quick call-to-action

EVENT MARKETING

If you have a list, email marketing is your easiest channel to build awareness. Gather partners, speakers, or corporate lists use these email marketing guidelines:

- Design a compelling invitation
- Use Pithy Subject Lines that inspire, or motivate someone to open the e-mail
- Send during the weekend or toward the later part of the week to increase open rates
- Include refer to a friend buttons, video thumbnails of speaker, and event highlights
- Include all the social media icon's on e-mail so people can friend and follow the event
- Send often and repeatedly, use early-bird promo's, speaker line-up's, registration deadlines as triggers

SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

Events are social occasions therefore social media should be used before, during and after your event to build awareness. Here's how to promote the event with social media and blog posts:

- Create an event hashtag that is short and use it for every tweet and post-tweet key sound bites during the event and mention who said what
- Change your links on Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn to go directly to the event landing page
- Post images and pictures of the event on Facebook, LinkedIn and Google+
- Engage the right target audience, do some research to find like-minded followers
- Tweet often and frequently using tools like Hoot Suite or Buffer can help you schedule tweets. Sample Tweets; Registration open, Early-bird ends Friday, Tweet quotes from speakers and highlights from their presentation
- Write some pre-event blogs that you can send out in advance as an event "tease"

MEDIA COVERAGE

If you want the media to push out your event details find the right vehicle and writer or influencer by searching key publications on-line and local writers through Google "event calendars".

- Host a media social hour with the speakers and sponsors over drinks
- Send a calendar notice to the local business publications or chamber websites
- Offer appropriate media a press badge and media rate to attend your event

THE END IS IN SIGHT

Just because the event is over, your marketing doesn't end there. Event recap blog posts are often easy and fun to write. Post them on the event site or submit them as a guest post to a relevant blog or local or industry / association website. They can include all kinds of relevant content such as:

- Summary of presentations
- Speaker quotes
- Who was spotted doing what
- Top Tweets
- Event photo-gallery

Each event is unique and should be handled on a case-by-case basis. Events can be glamorous affairs or a tedious waste of time. The tipping point is often in executing, marketing and controlling of logistics. Happy Planning.

For more information on Event Marketing Contact Jodi Cross at jcross@crossnm.com or visit crossnm.com

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